Works of righteousness, what are they?

De Maria | 10/12/2015

Titus 3:5

Not by **works of righteousness** which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

What are these "works of righteousness" to which St. Paul refers?

In my opinion, a work of righteousness can include any good deed which is commanded by God. That includes the Commandments, the Beautitudes, the virtues, the works of spiritual and corporal mercy, etc. etc.

And St. Paul says that we are not saved BY those. Does that sound strange? Is he saying that we can neglect these and be saved? By no means! In many other verses, St. Paul is very clear that we need to do good works in order to be saved.

So, your first question might be, “then, what is St. Paul talking about?”

At this point, I’d like to ask you to revisit this article, “We are saved by faith and works, in a manner of speaking”.

To summarize that article, the Catholic Church teaches that we are not literally saved by our faith and works. Our faith and works, combined, do not amount to the value of the gift of eternal life which Jesus died upon the Cross to bestow upon us. Nor can we, by our own physical effort, wash our souls of sins.

On the other hand, the reason that we frequently say that we are saved BY faith and works, is because God will not shed His mercy on any except those who, by faith, do His works. Scripture is clear:

Exodus 20:6

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

In other words, if you do not do the will of God, you will not be saved by God.

Again, Scripture says:

Matthew 7:**21** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. **22** Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? **23** And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Are we on the same page yet? I hope so. Let's move on.

I guess your next question might be, "why do I even ask this question?"

Because Protestants use this to claim that we are saved by faith alone. They make the following logical paradigm.

We are not saved by works of righteousness, therefore we are saved by faith alone.

It sounds logical, right? So, what's wrong with that paradigm?

They neglect the rest of the verse. The verse goes on to say,

"but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"

a. according to His mercy - that takes us back to Exodus 20:6 which I quoted above.

b. by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost - Surprisingly, Protestants don't recognize this as a description of Baptism. Not only is it a description of Baptism, but it can be understood to be a description of all the Sacraments, since all the Sacraments are effusions of the Holy Spirit.

And that's where their paradigm fails.

Here's the Catholic paradigm on this verse

We are not saved by works of righteousness. We are not saved by doing the Commandments. We are not saved by anything that we do. But those who keep the Commandments, and those who do works of righteousnees, are saved, by the mercy of God.

Do you see the relationship? The Commandments of God are the basis of every

good work which we can do.

To put it bluntly, we can't wash our own souls. God is the only one who can do that. And God won't do it for anyone except for those who have kept His Commandments. I don’t care if you go to Communion everyday and have received every Sacrament:

Romans 2:13 For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

In order to be justified, in order to be saved, we must keep the Commandments of God:

Revelation 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. **14**Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. **15**For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

For instance. Let’s say that you come to Communion in a state of mortal sin without repentance. What does the Church Teach? It is a sacrilege, right? This is why people who use contraception or who are living together but not married, should not receive Communion. Because they are in a state of sin.

Therefore, since these people are not keeping the Commandments. They are in a state of sin and will not receive the grace of God.

Let me know if you understand, below. Because this teaching is surprisingly hard for many to understand. But it is elegantly explained in Matt 25:31-46. The parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

Those who keep the Commandments and do works of righteousness, are the Sheep. That is the set from which all who are saved are drawn.

Those who do not keep the Commandments and do not do works of righteousness, are the Goats. That is the set of all who are condemned to eternal punishment.

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